HARRIET VAN HORNE

Doubts About Dallas

IT HAS always seemed to be that the conspiracy theory of history makes its strongest appeal to the weak-minded. I refuse to believe that some plumed and belted early wrote Shakespeare's plays. I decline to accept that gypsy crone, who calls herself Anastasia, as the daughter of the Czar.

Such notions are, of course, revealed truth to people who know there are hordes of Communists in the State Department and armadas of flying saucers Out There. I sit in the skeptic's corner. That's why I am astonished to find myself somewhat troubled by the recent spate of writings, here and abroad, suggesting that Lee Harvey Oswald may not have been the assassin of President Kennedy.

These writings, let me say quickly, are not conclusive in any sense. But they do cast certain doubts on the official case against Oswald.

A dramatic piece of evidence—again, inconclusive—was the photograph reproduced in the weekend papers. Taken at the very instant the President lurched forward in his car, the photo showed a dimly familiar figure in the doorway of the Texas Schoolbook Depository. Enlarged several times, the figure bears a marked resemblance to Oswald. Was it he? If so, how could he have been, at the same moment, six flights above the street firing a rifle?

If we are to believe the FBI, the man in the doorway was another employee of the depository, a man who rejoiers in the name Billy Lovelady.

From the day of the assassination, a considerable body of opinion in Europe has inclined toward the conspiracy theory. One of the most talked-about books in England is "Who Killed Kennedy?" by an American expatriate, Thomas Buchanan.

Buchanan's main theses are not new. But they remind one again of how very touchy the FBI has been in its brief, almost noncommittal replies to the inevitable questions.

Because there were five bullets (Buchanan insists) and because one apparently entered Kennedy's throat from the front, he feels there must have been two assassins.

Buchanan's conclusion: Right-wing, oil-rich Dallas hired left-wing, dirt-poor Oswald to do the awful deed, then supplied a second killer in case Oswald weakened or missed the target.

Mr. Conrad
Mr. Evans
Mr. Gale
Mr. Tavel
Mr. Trotter
Tele. Room
Miss Holmes
Miss Gandy

What do we know of this Van Horne character?

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A more scholarly case has been marshalled by a Canadian, a former Rhodes scholar now teaching sociology at Berkeley. Prof. Mordechai Brienberg says in The Spectator (a slim but influential British weekly), that District Attorney Wade changed his statements on half a dozen crucial points. He takes the official version of Oswald's movements after leaving the warehouse and demolishes it, step by step.

Brienberg also finds it odd that the doctors who worked so valiantly on Kennedy have no been forbidden to discuss the case, particularly since, he says, their report cannot be reconciled with police reports.

In his meticulous way, the professor finds it significant that Oswald had in his possession the private phone number of the FBI official in charge of "subversives" in Dallas. "This information is not obtainable from the Dallas phone directory," he writes. "Moreover, the agent had contacted Oswald several times before the assassination." Could Oswald, he seems to be asking, have worked as an informer for the FBI?

Whatever the merits of these writings, the question of who killed Kennedy will doubtless be argued by historians still unborn. As citizens, the aspects of the case we should find most troubling are the ineptitudes of the Dallas police, the carelessness of the Secret Service and the arrogant above-the-fray attitude of the FBI. In a democracy there is no place for "secret police," however holy their reputation.